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Frech, Jacob

Probable dependence of legalizing the ethical...

[Washington]

[1921]

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... Probable dependence of legalizing the ethical rights of pedestrians on the popularizing the teaching of logic ... [Washington, 1921]
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Caption-title.
Letter to the Honorable commissioners of the District of Columbia, signed Jacob Frech.

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SUBJECT: Probable dependence of legalizing the ethical rights of pedestrians on the popularizing the teaching of logic.

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Box 282

Washington, D. C.,
August 14, 1921.

The Honorable Commissioners
of the District of Columbia.

Gentlemen:

1. Adverting to the fourteen letters addressed to the Commissioners during the period of five years, September 11, 1915, to September 10, 1920, on the subject of the ethical but not yet legal right of pedestrians to dignified and safe passage on a street crossing and on a roadway having no sidewalks, attention is respectfully invited to the following extracts from some of those letters:

(Par. 2, Sept. 10, 1920.) It is highly probable that no material, ethical or humane improvement in the rhetoric of the traffic safety legislation of our Nation, the most civilized Nation in the World, can be attained until those underlying principles evolved in this discussion *which may upon scientific investigation be proved to be sound*, are *generally known and understood*, and consequently generally favorably entertained in or imbibed by the minds of at least a majority of our citizens.

(Par. 3, Sept. 10, 1920.) The Enc. Brit., quoted in par. 15, Jan. 10, 1920, tells us that "on the Continent and in England there was *during two centuries* a steady flow of literary attacks on the reasonableness of the belief in witchcraft"; a superstitious belief or faith that caused 9,500,000 innocent unfortunate persons (par. 12, Jan. 10, 1020) to be legally charged, legally convicted and publicly executed. The painfulness of the mode of killing these persons was a greater evil from that point of view than the evil created by the World War. *Nevertheless it took two centuries of educative criticism* to excavate a relevant piece of paved-over TRUTH (Par. 14, Jan. 10, 1920).

(Par. 7, Jan. 10, 1920.) While that lamentable destruction of human life was going on in every Christian country, as now

goes on the destruction of pedestrian lives because of a *nigh universal false belief*, the ill-informed, ill-trained, conscientious public looked on as placidly and nondisapprovingly, as nearly all of us do NOW on the wounding and killing of pedestrians *classed* by various Coroner's juries, many newspapers, and other makers of public opinion, *as species of*

Careless pedestrian (Par. 1 to 17, Nov. 25, 1916);
Negligent pedestrian (Par. 1 to 17, Nov. 25, 1916);
Imprudent pedestrian (Par. 17 and 18, Mch. 31, 1917);
Jaywalking pedestrian (Par. 2 to 19, Dec. 6, 1916);
Newspaper-reading pedestrian (Par. 23, May 2, 1918);
Dangerous or defiant pedestrian (Par. 13, Jan. 5, 1917);

that is, they constitute a genus of

Ill-deserving, or
Reprehensible persons,

by reason of the aversive acessory ideas in those terms.

(Par. 8, Jan. 10, 1920.) Some day, possibly, in a future generation, when logic—the science of frank, honest and sincere thinking—*shall be adequately taught in the public schools* and applied to the realm of Ethics, constituting it a science necessarily limited to conduct between human beings, and towards the lower animals, and serving as an acknowledged goal to legislation, our then better informed and trained makers of public opinion may begin to see that the persons who are being *legally* wounded and killed by drivers are nearly all species of

Immature (Par. 11 to 17, Nov. 25, 1916);
Aged (Par. 17, Mch. 31, 1917);
Inexperienced (Par. 11 to 17, Nov. 25, 1916);
Timid (Par. 11 to 17, Nov. 25, 1916);
Eye-defective (Par. 21, Jan. 5, 1917);
Ear-defective (Par. 3 to 30, Mch. 31, 1917);
Infirm (Par. 10-c, Jan. 10, 1920) or
Invalid persons;

that is, they constitute a genus of

Unfortunate persons, or
Outlawed persons, or
Doubly-handicapped persons,

unable to successfully cope against *homicidal conditions that the defective rhetoric of the law permits or creates.*

(Par. 9, Jan. 10, 1920.) A number of cases tending to support

this theory have been analyzed in the following designated paragraphs, namely:

No. 1 of Sept. 11, 1915;
No. 7 of Nov. 30, 1915;
No. 13 of June 22, 1916;
No. 6 of Oct. 18, 1916;
No. 11 to 13 of Nov. 25, 1916;
No. 2-b and 12, 18 and 21 of Jan. 5, 1917;
No. 17 to 19 of Mch. 31, 1917;
No. 10, 16 and 37 of June 5, 1917 (cases of President Wilson and Mrs. Wilson).

(Par. 11, Jan. 10, 1920.) It will probably be conceded that a traffic safety-law should be couched in *frank, honest*, sincere, and explicit or specific language.

(A) Such a law would, for the instruction of drivers with regard to human life, have a major premise explicitly speaking of one or more of the species of pedestrians named in par. 8, or would be so worded as to show that it has one or more of that species in contemplation. Our law does not do that.

(B) It would have one or more major premises coupling the term *right of way* with the term *pedestrian.* Our law has no such major premise. *

(C) It would have one or more major premises coupling the term *timely*-slowing down or *timely*-slacking speed *when dangerously approaching a pedestrian's* path, with the term vehicle or street car. Our law has no such major premise.

(Par. 18, Jan. 10, 1920.) The probably extreme importance to the physical, intellectual and ethical advancement of this Nation that might necessarily result from a *scientific discussion of the question* of the ethical but not yet legal right of a pedestrian (say, a mother, par. 7, June 5, 1917), to dignified (par. 15, June 22, 1916) and safe passage on a street crossing or on a roadway having no sidewalks, is the apology of the writer for this unavoidably long contribution to such discussion. It being possible that as a logical consequence of the *instituting*, when popular opinion will *permit*, a *Governmental Department of Science* (pars. 23 and 24, May 2, 1918) there would result *Governmental initiative* and *encouragement of the study* by our public-school teachers and scholars, and consequently by most of our people and by the teachers and scholars in the higher educational institutions, of the

* Amendment of regulations effective May 3, 1925, gives right of way to pedestrians on unguarded street crossings in the District of Columbia.

science and the art of frank, honest, sincere, humanely purposive, or telic, *thinking* (par. 41, May 2, 1918).

(Par. 19, Jan 10, 1920.) Frank, honest and sincere *thinking* is a *prerequisite* to frank, honest and sincere *stating*. Frank, honest and sincere stating (veracious stating) to every person or group of persons, that is ethically entitled to a veracious statement—where courtesy or modesty, or consideration for the welfare of the addressee (an invalid, for instance) does not enjoin silence or kindly disposed deception—is probably a *prerequisite* to the earning of the CONFIDENCE, TRUST or SYMPATHETIC feeling of that person, or group of persons; and is, consequently, probably a *prerequisite* to the establishing and preserving UNIVERSAL ethical or social HARMONY (par. 40, May 2, 1918).

Such a result would tend to the discovery of major premises to insert in the Police Regulations that would tend to insure to PEDESTRIANS, to human beings, the *legal* right to dignified and safe passage on a street crossing and on a roadway having no sidewalks.

(Par. 20, Jan. 10, 1920.) When once the scientific and ethical ATTITUDE of MIND is formed in any group, it is probable that it would be considered by the majority of that group, to be as unscientific, as unethical, as DISHONORABLE, for any two or more persons to engage in discourteous or vindictive intellectual or physical combat, as it is now considered to be educative, entertaining and HONORABLE to engage in scientific, courteous or playful intellectual or physical contests.

(Par. 12, May 2, 1918.) It is probably as certain as it is remarkable and lamentable that *many* educated persons have had *no opportunity* to have knowledge of what the words *Middle Term* stand for; and that probably *very many* educated persons have no *adequate* knowledge of what the words Middle Term stand for. * * * Probably much of *each* of the ethical treatises of the Nineteenth and earlier centuries is practically *valueless or worse* because the derived conclusions are drawn from *dogmatic* premises or from premises containing either an Undistributed *Middle Term* or an Ambiguous *Middle Term* or some other violation of the rules of the Syllogism.

(Par. 10, May 2, 1918.) Logic teaches us that having discovered any one principle of nature we can record it in the form of a General Proposition (or TRUTH) and place or file it in the record-body of SCIENCE, thus forming or creating an exhaustless

TRUTH-TREASURY, upon which we can FOREVER make drafts: each draft being in the form of a MINOR PREMISE of a deductive syllogism; so that whenever we wish, in any certain CASE (phenomenon, object, problem, difficulty, etc.,) to know or to use any subordinate or unobvious individual or specific TRUTH INVOLVED (or inexplicitly contained or embodied) in such a recorded or known general proposition, we can by the exercise of our trained logical powers or ingenuity, obtain that involved individual or specific truth by DEDUCTION (or deductive methods); by using that general proposition as a MAJOR PREMISE of the necessarily resulting deductive SYLLOGISM.

2. In order that any intelligent thinking person may be enabled in a few hours to make himself or herself familiar with what has been viewed as a mystery, or *the* mystery, of Syllogism or HOW we THINK, the writer has placed—upon one page of the accompanying inclosure, entitled "SisMisP, or the a b c of Thinking," as nearly as words can do so—a moving picture of typical intellectual successive momenta constituting a Thought-Unit. The second page of the inclosure contains what may prove to be useful relevant information. The aim of the inclosure is to convince any person—who is interested in Education and its function in advancing the Nation—that the frank, honest, sincere and adequate teaching of Logic in the public schools, will be of greater importance and utility than any subject now being publicly taught; because it will tend to enhance in value the personal efficiency produced by every one of the other subjects that students are now learning; it will tend to affix some degree of INITIATIVE to every acquired accomplishment. Compare a person who is an illogical or emotional thinker, with a person who is in any degree a logical, and consequently a calm, thinker.

3. Objection may naturally arise to the name SisMisP or Sismisp; one reason being that it is not euphonious. Precision (or univocality) and connotativeness are essential in the choice or invention of a term. There is probably no word in the English language that is as precise and as connotative as Sismisp. This *one word* is a miniature *chapter* on thinking. Many pages would be required to enumerate the *instructive connotation* which it suggests.

For instance: No legislator can make any precept whatever (law, regulation, etc.) or state any principle, for guidance, that is not reducible to the propositional form M is P. No police officer

can observe anything that comes within his disciplinary province that is not representable by the S, and when he decides to act in the matter, he decides that this S is M. His eyes or ears give him the S and his memory of his instructions, constituting part of his understanding, or knowledge, gives him the M. As more fully explained in par. 25, May 2, 1918, the prosecuting officer or the plaintiff's attorney looks for the best relevant M that he can find and then tries to convince the jury and the judge that S is M; whereas the attorney for the accused or the defendant aims to prove that the other side has the wrong S or the wrong M, or the like. When the judge sentences any person, his sentence is reducible to the propositional form S is P. *If he states also either one of the two premises as a reason why he pronounces the sentence, he introduces the M of the syllogism. If he states *both* premises, he says: S is M and M is P; therefore S is P; or S is P because S is M and M is P.

4. Thinking it possible that the Commissioners may desire to bring the information contained in the inclosure to the attention of scientific bodies and to Educators of the Nation, for an exacting criticism or for their information, the writer has had a large number printed, with that end in view; and he will be pleased to present to the Commissioners as *many* copies as they may desire, at any time, *or times*, for *any* purpose or use that they may find for them.

5. Following are additional relevant extracts from prior letters:

(Par. 14, Sept. 10, 1920.) If the thought stated in par. 18, Nov. 30, 1915, (that the remedy is, a careful adequate change in the wording of the regulations) is reasonably TRUE, reasonably logical, reasonably scientific, reasonably HUMANE, then the killings, the injurings and the injurious frightenings caused directly by this class of conscientious, law-conforming, auto-drivers, are *certainly* and *avoidably caused* indirectly *by the inadequate rhetoric of the present legislation;* and consequently, as legislation is not self-creative and not self-perpetuative, *the remediable cause of the evil is to be sought for or to be found* by a critical examination of *the relevant conscious or unconscious premises* existing in the minds of the proponents and of the authors of the existing legislation; and existing in the minds of the proponents for a continuance or a non-change of the existing legislation, and existing in the minds of the persons having *legal* power or authority to change the regulations.

* This syllogistic principle applies to every class of judgment whether of a World Court, a Municipal Court, or of any person whatever.

(Par. 15, Sept. 10, 1920.) Those relevant conscious or unconscious premises probably should for ethical and scientific reasons be ascertained and reduced to writing, when time permits, after *scientific investigation;* the resulting syllogisms can then be calmly and scientifically examined—thus FOLLOWING LINCOLN'S EXAMPLE (par. 9, Sept. 10, 1920)—in order to see if there is any material fault in the premises. If there is any such fault found in the premises (such as Lincoln pointed out) it would probably be unfair and HOMICIDAL for society to assume or to contend that premises of that class support the continuance (or non-change) conclusion.

6. The writer's apology for this letter is the extreme importance to the Nation of a scientific discussion of this subject, if the stated principles are reasonably sound.

Sincerely,

JACOB FRECH.

As has been done with all prior letters on this subject, copies of this letter and its inclosure will be transmitted, respectively, to

The Chief Justice of the United States;
The Chief Justice of the District Supreme Court;
The Judge of the Police Court, D. C.;
The United States Attorney, D. C., and
The Coroner,

with the permission, and for the reasons stated in par. 15, April 3, 1916.

Reprinted from The Washington Times, June 23, 1924.

GARRETT P. SERVISS ON HOW LINCOLN LEARNED LOGIC

His Study of Euclid Taught Him Meaning of "Demonstration" and Put Edge on Legal Work.

IT may be an inducement to others to devote a little extra attention to elementary mathematical studies if Abraham Lincoln's experience with Euclid's geometry is recalled. Lincoln was one of the most convincing reasoners that ever addressed an audience or a court or expressed his views in a State paper.

How he himself believed that he arrived at his acknowledged pre-eminence in that respect is best told in his own words, addressed to a New England clergyman, who interviewed him in a railroad train after his triumphant speech in Cooper Institute hall, in 1860.

"Your question," said Mr. Lincoln, when the interviewer asked him how he had prepared himself for his profession, "reminds me of a bit of education I had which I am bound in honesty to mention. In the course of my law reading I came constantly upon the word "demonstrate." I thought at first that I understood the meaning, but soon became satisfied that I did not.

Learned Word's Meaning.

"I said to myself, 'What do I do when I demonstrate more than when I reason to prove? How does demonstration differ from any other proof?' I consulted Webster's dictionary. That told of 'certain proof,' 'proof beyond the possibility of doubt;' but I could form no idea of what sort of proof that was. I thought a great many things were proved beyond the possibility of doubt without recourse to any such extraordinary process of reasoning as I understood 'demonstration' to be.

"I consulted all the dictionaries and books of reference I could find, but with no better results. You might as well have defined blue to a blind man. At last I said: 'Lincoln, you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what demonstrate means;' and I left my situation in Springfield, went home to my father's house and stayed there till I could give any proposition in the six books of Euclid at sight. I then found out what 'demonstrate' means, and went back to my law studies."

There is probably no more illuminating anecdote than that concerning any of the great men in all history. It ought to be hung in good big letters on the wall of every study room and every court room, too. But observe what a tribute it offers to the value of mathematical method of reasoning. Lincoln's law books could not satisfy him as to the meaning of demonstration. Literary definitions of the word were too hazy and indefinite for his truth-seeking mind.

His Logic a Sword.

Only the rigid processes of the old Greek geometer seemed to him to meet the need of the reasoner who set out after demonstrated proof. And yet modern mathematicians find that Euclid himself has not approached as close to absolute demonstration in all his propositions as the spirit of mathematics demands!

But Lincoln found Euclid quite perfect enough for his purposes. The Euclidian method was incomparably superior to any that his law books and his studies of court practice taught him; and when he re-entered the legal arena, armed with the logic of Euclid, he was like Achilles on the field of Troy with weapons and armor forged in Vulcan's own smithy.

I do not know whether or not any considerable improvement could be made in prevailing methods of presenting elementary mathematics in school, and I am not specially concerned about that question. But my correspondence continues to show me that there are many educated people who, somehow or other, failed to get in school what they should have got, and what they now regret that they did not get, in the way of mathematical training, and my special object is to convince them that in this, as in other things, it is never too late to learn. And often late learning is the most delightful, and the most truly instructive.

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